This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

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UNCLAS LAGOS 001549

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV NI
SUBJECT: DEADLY SHOOTOUT BETWEEN POLICE AND ARMY ROCKS LAGOS

¶1. At least three bystanders were killed and ten wounded, when an altercation between police and soldiers turned violent in the Ojuelegba district of Lagos on October 6. More than 50 street thugs, known as area boys, joined in the fray and caused the destruction of at least 40 vehicles and several local shops, according to press and police sources. The incident lasted approximately five hours, forcing businesses in the area to shut down.

¶2. The ultimate cause of the dispute is still unknown as many versions exist. Several police authorities reported that the argument began on a bus in Surulere on the Lagos mainland. A police officer had boarded the bus for free as a courtesy of the bus driver, but when the soldier attempted to do the same, he was rebuffed. Municipal bus drivers customarily allow one civil servant to board without paying, but generally ask all others for full fare. The soldier and the policeman argued over who would get the free fare, and when the bus reached the police station, the soldier attempted to continue the argument by going into the police station, but was barred entry. The soldier then went to the nearby Abati Barracks to summon reinforcements to force entry. A firefight ensued and innocent bystanders were caught in the crossfire.

¶3. Other sources report that trouble began when military passengers on the bus instructed the driver to ignore a police checkpoint; still others claim that a soldier driving a military vehicle was physically assaulted at a police checkpoint. According to another version, the soldiers attacked the police station to free relatives held there.

¶4. Lagos State Governor Tinubu visited the scene, which he called "sad," and then convened an emergency State Security Council meeting, comprised of top members of the military and law enforcement, to discuss the event and initiate an investigation.
WHOWE